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Viewing cable 09ATHENS1717, INFORMAL ADVISOR TO PAPANDREOU SHEDS LIGHT ON GOG INTERNAL

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09ATHENS1717	2009-12-20 22:05	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL//NOFORN	Embassy Athens

Appears in these articles:

<http://wlcentral.org/node/1826>

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 001717

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [GR](#) [TU](#) [MK](#) [CY](#)
SUBJECT: INFORMAL ADVISOR TO PAPANDREOU SHEDS LIGHT ON GOG INTERNAL
DYNAMICS AND REGIONAL CHALLENGES

CLASSIFIED BY: Daniel V. Speckhard, Ambassador; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) PolCouns and PolOff met December 3 with Paulina Lampsas, head of the PASOK International Secretariat, to discuss internal dynamics and key players in the Papandreu Administration and the current state of play in Cyprus and Turkey. Lampsas discussed her role and that of other semi-official advisors to the government, while also acknowledging public concerns over the abundance of backchannel conversations. Recently in Cyprus, Lampsas highlighted several potholes to be navigated in Cypriot internal politics and also raised concern about Greek economic and media opposition to a solution. Turning to other regional matters, Lampsas talked about the need for the government to develop an overall strategy on Turkey and for Alternate Foreign Dimitris Droutsas to be given more time to work the Macedonia name issue. In her estimation the election of Antonis Samaras as the new leader of main (center-right) opposition party ND will make it harder for Prime Minister George Papandreu to navigate a way forward on these issues.

INFORMAL ADVISORS

¶2. (C). Paulina Lampsas, the International Secretary for PASOK and an informal advisor to PM Papandreu, is a regular contact of the political section at Embassy Athens. She oversees Papandreu's international travel and work as President of Socialist International. She is also responsible for managing Papandreu's non-diplomatic networks and advising on foreign policy and communication strategies. She runs a small but expanding office that is set apart from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and PASOK party headquarters. Lampsas held this position prior to PASOK's electoral win in October and says that she asked to stay on in her current role, rather be brought into government as a Deputy Minister. Preferring to work directly for Papandreu, Lampsas did not want to have to report to a different Minister. She "sometimes" coordinates with the MFA but otherwise acts as a direct informal advisor to PM Papandreu, before input is sought within the government.

¶3. (C) Lampsas noted that Alex Rondos has also been acting as an informal advisor out of the limelight and has been taking on special cases and projects on behalf of the Prime Minister.

Although an informal advisor herself, Lampsas acknowledged the potential for confusion and crossed lines, expressing concern that there was too much "secret diplomacy" going on within the current administration and that many at the working level in the MFA were not receiving information on sensitive issues. In her words, "there is a danger in not informing government of where they are getting information."

CYPRUS

¶4. (C) Lampsas described the timeline for movement in Cyprus to be between now and mid-February, seeing upcoming elections in the "TRNC" as more of a driving force for progress than December EU meetings to discuss Turkish EU accession. Both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders understand that movement is needed in order to demonstrate their positive leadership going into the election.

¶5. (C) Qpsa recently met with Republic of Cyprus President Demetris Christofias and assesses that he wants to "move" on the issues being negotiated and is working with Greece to determine the

best way to bring about progress. However, several internal and external issues block movement. Lampsas expressed concern that certain factions within both Cyprus and Greece oppose a solution and will actively work against resolution and reunification of the island. Christofias cannot trust elements in his own coalition government. Lampsas described Christofias as having a "communist party mentality" where interlocutors have to read between the lines; some messages are not clear.

¶6. (C) Lampsas also assessed that internal dynamics at play in Cyprus make it hard for Greece to work issues through the "right" channels. As an example, Lampsas said that Cypriot President Christofias does not trust his Foreign Minister and therefore Greek messages passed through the Cypriot Foreign Ministry will not elicit the desired response. However, Christofias would never publicly undermine FM Kyprianou and therefore messages continue to be communicated through foreign ministry channels.

¶7. (C) Lampsas's assessment is that a carefully crafted media and communication strategy is sorely needed, in order to pave the way for public support for a solution. There should be coordinated messages delivered by the leadership but also via influential columnists with the ability and legitimacy to advocate for a solution and explain the dangers posed if current talks fail. The time to move on these efforts is now.

¶8. (C) Certain media and economic personalities in Greece are also opposed to a solution. In particular, Lampsas sees the Bobolos media group, including newspapers Ethnos, Protothemis, Parent, Makedonia (in Thessaloniki) and the Mega Channel on television as working against the process. On the other side, Lampsas said the Lambrakis media group (which includes Ta Nea, To Vima and the influential website INGR) and certain elements associated with Kathermerini are willing to support resolution of the Cyprus conflict. (Comment: In our estimation, the Greek newspapers referenced above are not necessarily as influential as the newspapers in Cyprus itself. Television stations in Cyprus may be somewhat anti-Annan plan but are not necessarily anti-solution.)

GREEK- TURKISH DIPLOMACY: NEED TO DESIGNATE A NEW POINT
PERSON-----

¶9. (C) Lampsas characterized Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan as being less predictable than Papandreou's former Turkish interlocutor, Ismail Cem. The Greek administration knows relations will be "very sensitive" around the time of the December EU summit, and will therefore proceed with caution.

¶10. (C) Lampsas seemed perplexed by the amount of information on recent Greek-Turkish interactions that Turkey was sharing publicly, citing Turkish officials' public comments on a letter from Turkish PM Erdogan to Papandreou and recent meetings with both Turkey's Foreign Minister and Chief EU Negotiator as examples. In contrast, information seems to be tightly guarded on the Greek side; Lampsas claimed that the Greek MFA's Turkey desk is not necessarily in the loop regarding high-level discussions with the Turks. She has lobbied in favor of designating a point person - with access to the Prime Minister's cabinet - to work on an overarching strategy for Greek relations with Turkey. Pavlos Apostolides has been rumored for the position. (Note: Currently an advisor at the Athens-based think tank ELIAMEP, Apostolides has held several high profile government positions, including Greek Ambassador to Cyprus, Permanent Representative to the European Union Secretary General of the MFA and Director of the National Intelligence Agency. End Note)

¶11. (C) With the election of Samaras as the head of center-right opposition party New Democracy (ND), Lampsas estimates that Papandreou's PASOK-led government will face greater criticism and constraints in negotiations with Skopje and Ankara. Samaras, who was the more conservative of the main candidates in the ND leadership race, is expected to try to woo far-right LAOS party members into his camp. In turn, this could shift the ND party to the right.

¶12. (C) Lampsas also expressed concern with Samaras' choice of Panos Panayotopoulos as the new ND party spokesman, claiming that Panayiotopoulos is known for his nationalist rhetoric and may try to bring nationalist language into mainstream discussions. (Note: Panayotopoulos was Minister of LQR under the Karamanlis Sr. administration and is currently a Member of Parliament. Samaras appointed him as the new ND spokesman the first week of December. End Note) Samaras' rumored pick for a shadow cabinet position, John Korantis, would also be problematic in Lampsas's view because of his former role as the head of the Greek National Intelligence Agency and the possibility that he could leak sensitive information.
Speckhard